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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1856  
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1746  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1816  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 001840

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN  
NSC FOR MERKEL

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER LOOKS SOUTH FOR OPPORTUNITY AND NERVOUSLY  
AT GEORGIA

CLASSIFIED BY: TJACOBSON, AMBASSADOR, STATE, STATE.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a 45-minute meeting with Assistant  
Secretary Richard Boucher October 6, Foreign Minister Talbak

SIPDIS

Nazarov remarked that the United States and Tajikistan have a  
positive bilateral relationship because they have built an  
atmosphere of trust. He thanked Boucher for the U.S. security  
and economic assistance but urged increased U.S. engagement in  
Afghanistan, where the deteriorating situation poses a direct  
threat to Tajikistan. The short and long-term electricity  
supply remains a top concern. END SUMMARY.

AFGHANISTAN

12. (C) Nazarov expressed a fear that the "exacerbated"  
situation in southern Afghanistan could move north, posing a  
direct threat to Tajikistan's border and stability. "The  
illicit drug flow is more than enough already," he quipped.  
Tajikistan did not want to seriously criticize the Afghan  
government, but encouraged the United States to step up its  
engagement. Nazarov noted that recent announcement that NATO  
will increase troop numbers was a good sign. Afghanistan is a  
big country that needs more forces, he advised. Nazarov  
applauded efforts to train Afghan police to help fight the  
Taliban, but noted the Afghan border guards also needed  
assistance.

13. (C) Boucher agreed that expanding government operations and  
increasing the Afghan police and armed forces would lead to  
greater stability, but Afghanistan also needed significant  
infrastructure to achieve real peace. The fundamental issue, he  
said, was to strengthen government in Afghanistan's border areas.

14. (SBU) Nazarov noted that bilateral relations between  
Dushanbe and Kabul were good, and getting stronger, as the two  
countries signed more agreements and increase operational  
cooperation, particularly on drugs. The U.S.- funded bridge at  
Nizhniy Pyanj, slated to open Summer 2007, will provide further  
opportunities for cooperation, and trade.

## ENERGY

15. (SBU) Because Tajikistan has no gas or oil, Nazarov noted that securing electricity for the winter was a top priority. He lamented the inadequate transmission network that cut off northern Tajikistan from the south. Tajikistan had recently reached an agreement with Kyrgyzstan to purchase electricity, but because transmission lines go through Uzbekistan, Tashkent scuttled the deal, and then suggested the Tajiks purchase Uzbek electricity, and three times the cost. The Chinese project to build South-North high voltage transmission lines through the Varzob Gorge will eliminate this problem by connecting directly to Kyrgyzstan's network, but those lines will not be ready for at two years.

16. (C) Nazarov hinted that Uzbekistan had also played a role in the changing relations between the Tajik government and RusAl's Oleg Deripaska over the Rogun hydropower station. "I don't want to blame the Uzbeks, but when Deripaska came back from Tashkent, he came a different person" and no longer accepted the long-standing design for a 335 meter earth-and-rock dam. The recently published Lahmayer technical study on Rogun had not entirely settled the issue of height and of a cement versus earth dam. The World Bank will be weighing in with an independent assessment.

17. (SBU) Nazarov said the upcoming Central Asia and South Asia Electricity Trade conference in Dushanbe October 26-28, would provide another opportunity for regional countries to work out trade agreements for electricity, particularly for Afghanistan. He noted that Tajikistan had a good record of exporting to those places in Afghanistan that had transmission lines. "Even in the winter, when we don't have enough electricity, we still export to Afghanistan."

## INVESTMENT CLIMATE AND CORRUPTION

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18. (C) Boucher observed that the investment climate and widespread corruption meant Tajikistan remained a risk for investors. He noted that the unresolved case of Gerald Metals with the state aluminum plant "TadAZ" stood out as an example of what could happen in Tajikistan, and urged the Tajik government to help resolve the case soon. Nazarov called the former TadAZ director a criminal, and remarked that the director was being also prosecuted in London. Nazarov reported that Tajikistan signed the anti-corruption convention in New York during the UN general Assembly meetings in September. New domestic legislation also addresses corruption.

## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

19. (C) In response to Boucher's question about the November 6 presidential election, Nazarov laughed and said, "I only know what I read." He said he was surprised the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) has declined to put up a candidate, but reported that a friend of his in the party has said they did not want to "waste their time." The Islamists would save their efforts and strength for the future. Nazarov noted that some parties worked quietly to build their base, while others quarreled among themselves.

110. (SBU) Nazarov reported that President Rahmonov had given firm instructions that all candidates should have access to state media services, and ministers and local officials were not to interfere in the election process. Observers from any country would be allowed on November 6.

111. (SBU) Boucher asked whether there were any plans to investigate or punish cases where fraud did occur. "I honestly don't know," said the foreign minister. "You can ask the president." Boucher states that the election was a chance to get the procedures and processes right.

112. (SBU) Boucher also asked about registration and licensing

of media outlets and radio stations, including U.S.-funded community radio stations through the non-governmental organization Internews. Nazarov switched to the subject of BBC, and reported he had personally spoken with the head of the state agency on radio, and it seemed likely the BBC would be licensed soon.

#### GEORGIA AND RUSSIA

¶13. (C) Mentioning with concern the situation between Russia and Georgia, Nazarov observed, "Whenever a big country and a small country come into conflict, the small country suffers first." Boucher said his message during upcoming consultations in Moscow was that U.S. and Russian goals and interests in the region are the same. Competition only harmed countries in the region, including Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

¶14. (SBU) COMMENT: Nazarov was relaxed and open, but non-committal on the elections, preferring to pass that to the President himself. END COMMENT.  
JACOBSON